

**NORTH CAROLINA TRAILS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

April 13, 2012
Jordan Lake State Recreation Area
Apex, North Carolina

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Barbara Oslund, Chair – Representing Equestrian Interests
Mr. Paul Elliot – Representing Mountain Bicycling Interests
Mr. Joe Jacob – Paddle Trail Interests
Mr. Leslie Love – Representing Hiking Interests
Mr. Brian Sears – Off Highway Vehicle Interests
Mr. Terry Smith – Representing Hiking Interests

DENR, DPR: Mr. Lewis Ledford, Director
Ms. Carol Tingley, Deputy Director
Mr. Brian Strong, Chief of Planning and Natural Resources
Mr. Darrell McBane, State Trails Program Manager
Ms. Amy Cooper, Northern Region Trails Specialist
Ms. Smith Raynor, Southern Region Trails Specialist
Mr. Tim Johnson, Mountain Region Trails Specialist
Mr. Vincent T. Newman-Brooks, Grants Manager

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Barbara Oslund, Chair Person called the meeting of the North Carolina Trails Committee (NCTC) to order at 10:00 a.m. Smith Raynor, the new Southern Region Trails Specialist was introduced.

II. Approval of Minutes from the September 30, 2011 NCTC Meeting

Motion - A motion was made by Joe Jacob to accept the September 30, 2011 minutes as presented. Brian Sears seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Director Ledford's Division of Parks and Recreation Report

Lewis Ledford, Director of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation provided the NCTC members with an update on topics important to the division.

Director Ledford thanked the members of the North Carolina Trails Committee for their willingness to serve on this important committee and for their efforts to review and make

grant funding recommendations for the Federal Recreational Trails Program and State Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program. He also noted his pleasure that the division retained the Southern Trails Specialist position and that he was happy to have Smith Raynor employed in this position.

Director Ledford then provided an update on the effects of last year's approved State budget on the division. He noted that the division did lose some positions (mostly vacant positions) but that no parks were closed. He also noted that the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund was tapped to provide \$8.5 million to help offset the State budget shortfall and an additional \$6 million to offset the Division of Parks and Recreation's overall budget. He is hopeful that during the coming Short Session of the NC General Assembly, that PARTF will not be needed to offset any state budget shortfalls. Because PARTF funds both state and local park projects, the program seems to have strong bipartisan support.

Director Ledford reported that the General Assembly created "Program Evaluation Division" was charged to study all state attractions for efficiencies. Included in this study were State Parks, State Historic Sites, Museum of Natural Sciences, State Aquariums, and the Zoo. The division provided a tremendous amount of information to this committee throughout 2011. This State Attractions Efficiency Study was released in February and the division received many positive comments and two recommendations: 1) consolidate the management of two State Parks in eastern North Carolina, and to close State Parks for 4 months during the winter. The immediate public outcry of concern about closing their State Parks during the winter months helped cause this recommendation to be revised. Agencies including the State Museums, State Aquariums and the State Zoo were encouraged to consider opportunities for joint public/private partnerships.

Director Ledford reported that the new Natural Resource Center, a world class research center, and future office of the Division of Parks and Recreation – has a grand opening gala scheduled for April 13, 2012. DPR's projected move date is April 27, 2012.

Director Ledford than shared with the NCTC members a video titled "I Love State Parks," produced to complement the division's application for the "Gold Medal Award" through the National Recreation and Parks Association.

State Trails Program Update

Darrell McBane, State Trails Program Manager provided the NCTC members an update on ongoing efforts to develop a statewide trails plan, through an open, inclusive and transparent planning process. Darrell stated that the division has negotiated with the Southwestern Commission Council of Governments to conduct a trail assessment and plan for the counties of Cherokee, Clay, Macon, Graham, Swain, Jackson, and Haywood. The information and data collected through this plan (and other planning efforts to date)

will be evaluated and refined – the refined process to be implemented in eastern North Carolina in 2013.

Darrell also reported that the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) funded the development of the Croatan Region Bicycle and Trail Plan that included the counties of Onslow, Jones, Craven, Pamlico and Carteret. NCDOT's interest is to plan and prioritize regional bicycle trails to points of interest and to help define probable trails connecting communities to and through the Croatan National Forest – including the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail. This effort has resulted in a proposed re-alignment of the MST through the Croatan National Forest.

NCTC Member Reports

Brian Sears reported on the activities of the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council's efforts to support continued funding of the Federal Recreational Trails Program. Brian also mentioned the NASCAR off road race in Burke Co that is expected to draw 25,000+ people to this area.

Joe Jacob reminded division staff of the importance of wearing "Personal Flotation Devices" when producing Gold Medal Award videos or Power Point Presentations – reminding all to not only be safe but to continually promote safe paddle programs.

Barbara Oslund reported that the Southeastern Equestrian Trail Conference may be going national or risk losing Federal Recreational Trails Program funding support from the Washington DC Office.

Terry Smith reported that he and other members of the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail Organization had participated in the development of the Croatan Region Bike and Trails Plan being developed by Eastern Carolina Council of Governments, a project funded by NC Department of Transportation. Terry and others have "ground truthed" many of the proposed routes for trails through the Croatan and have provided valuable information about what trail routes are accomplishable and what routes are not viable.

Other Reports

Kate Dixon, Executive Director of the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail organization reported that she had visited our congressional delegation lobbying for continued funding of the Federal Recreational Trail Program and that she is hopeful that because RTP funding is included in both the House and Senate budgets – that this important source of trail funding will be retained. Kate also stated that she is hopeful that an additional 80 miles of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail will be constructed and opened during the coming year. Kate noted that an "Ultra Runner" will soon begin the MST with plans to complete the trail in 22 days – a great opportunity for MST publicity. Kate concluded her remarks by saying that the FMST is promoting an additional route or re-route of the MST out of the Smoky Mountains National Park and in eastern North Carolina.

IV. Business

Review of 2012 Federal Recreational Trails Program Grant Applications

Darrell McBane began discussions of North Carolina's 2012 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants by reviewing the criteria by which staff evaluated and scored all applications received. Staff scores were averaged and project highlights, concerns and provisions were provided to the NCTC for consideration. A copy of Darrell's Power Point Presentation is attached.

Darrell then provided information about the amount of 2012 RTP funds available:

NC 2012 RTP Apportionment	\$ 1,129,758.00
Minus 10% Possible Federal Recessions	\$ 112,975.80
Total	\$ 1,016,782.20
Minus 12% (7% Admin - 5% Safety Education)	\$ 122,014.00
Total	\$ 894,768.20
30% OHV Allocation	\$ 268,430.46
70% for Non Motorized Projects	\$ 626,337.74
Plus Transfer of un-encumbered 2008 Projects	\$ 1,191,177.00
Grand Total for Non Motorized Projects	\$ 1,817,514.74

Darrell stated that there is \$268,430 available to fund motorized trail projects and \$1,817,514 to fund non-motorized trail for 2012.

Darrell then asked the committee members to consider all 63 applications received for the 2012 RTP funding totaling over \$4 million in requests.

After great discussion, the committee recommended funding 26 applications totaling \$1,481,718. Note: Some applications were recommended for funding with provisions that must be addressed by August 1, 2012 in order an application to remain listed for a grant award.

Motion – Brian Sears made a motion to forward to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a list of 26 applications for funding through the 2012 Recreational Trails Program. Joe Jacob seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. A list of the 2012 RTP grant-funding recommendations and provisions is attached.

Motion - Brian Sears made a motion that all listed provisions must be addressed by the applicant by August 1, 2012 for the application to be forwarded to the Secretary of the

Department of Environment and Natural Resources for funding. Joe Jacob seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Review of Applications Received for the 2010-2011 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program

Darrell McBane then asked the committee members to consider the 27 applications received for the 2012-2013 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program (AAT). Darrell stated that the requests totaled over \$127,551 for the \$108,000 available through this program. After much discussion, the committee recommended funding 12 applications for a total of \$58,186. **Note: Some applications were recommended for funding with provisions that must be addressed by August 1, 2012 in order an application to remain listed for a grant award.**

Motion – Brian Sears made a motion to forward to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a list of 12 applicants for the 2012-2013 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program funding. Joe Jacob seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. A list of the 2012-2013 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program funding recommendations and provisions is attached.

The NCTC then decided to announce a second call for 2012-2013 AAT grant applications and to highlight projects and items that are eligible for funding and that current AAT applicants should be informed about this second call for applications.

Motion: Brian Sears made a motion that the State Trails Program should advertise and accept State Adopt-A-Trail Grant Applications. This motion was seconded by Joe Jacob, after which the vote was unanimous.

V. Other Business

Friends of the Mountains To Sea Trail Organization for State Trail Designation of a 23 Mile Section of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail Between Penny's Bend Nature Preserve and Rolling View Recreation Area

Darrell McBane reported that the Friends of the Mountains To Sea Trail organization has applied for State Trail Designation status for a 23 mile section of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail between Penny's Bend Nature Preserve and Rolling View Recreation Area – Falls Lake State Recreation Area in Durham County. This application is endorsed by the US Army Corps of Engineers, the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and by the Botanical Garden Foundation, Inc, managers of all property on which this segment of the MST traverses.

Darrell noted the only concern staff have with recommending designation of this segment of the MST is that the trail crosses numerous NCDOT roads, bridges and culverts. Darrell stated that he had asked NCDOT to approve the crossing of NCDOT roads, bridges and culverts as part of the MST. Staff from NCDOT Division 5 have reviewed

all crossings, and are concerned with the crossing of two bridges, the Old Oxford Road Bridge and the Red Mill Road Bridge, both are older bridges that do not meet NCDOT bicycle and pedestrian road/bridge standards.

All involved parties are concerned for the safety of trail users; yet do not want to delay or to slow the development or opening of the MST to the public. DPR is working with partners to develop appropriate warning signs to notify the public that the trail ends at a point near the bridges of concern, and continues again on the other side of the bridge. Walking NCDOT roads or across bridges is not illegal but walking across these narrow bridges could be dangerous and could cause bodily harm or death. Staff with the Office of the Attorney General has (in the past) stated that the division should warn users of the potential danger or hazard and the consequences should a user decide to proceed.

Staff recommendation: recommend the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources award State Designated Trail status to this 23 mile section of the MST, in two sections that will be separated by the bridges of concern.

Motion: Joe Jacob made a motion that staff recommends the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources award State Designated Trail status to this 23 mile section of the MST, in two sections separated by the bridges of concern. Paul Elliot seconded the motion which was passed by unanimous vote.

Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail Organization Application for State Trail Designation of a 7.5 Mile Section of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail Between Bamboo Gap South to the Intersection with US321, Along 6.3 Parkway Miles from Milepost 285.5 to Milepost 291.8

Darrell McBane reported that the Friends of the Mountains To Sea Trail organization has applied for State Trail Designation status of a 7.5 Mile Section of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail Between Bamboo Gap South to the Intersection with US321, Along 6.3 Parkway Miles from Milepost 285.5 to Milepost 291.8. Staff endorse the recommendation of this 7.5 mile segment as a State Designated segment of North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail. This application is endorsed by the National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway, managers of all property on which this segment of the MST traverses.

Motion: Joe Jacob made a motion that staff recommend the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources award State Designated Trail status to this 7.5 mile segment of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail. Brian Sears seconded the motion which was passed by unanimous vote.

Alamance County's Application for State Trail Designation of a 3 Mile Section of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail Between Great Bend Park at Glencoe to Stoney Creek Marina in Alamance County.

Darrell McBane reported Alamance County has applied for State Trail Designation status of a 3-mile section of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail between Great Bend Park at Glencoe and Stoney Creek Marina be designated as a segment of North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail. This section of the trail is on publicly owned land. Great Bend Park at Glencoe is owned by Alamance County. The Carolina Mill section is a trail easement held by the City of Burlington. Between the Carolina Mill and Stoney Creek Marina, the parcels are a mix of fee simple properties and trail easements owned by Alamance County. The marina is owned by the City of Burlington.

Staff endorse this recommendation.

Motion: Paul Elliot made a motion that staff recommend the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources award State Designated Trail status to this 3 mile segment of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail. Les Love seconded the motion which was passed by unanimous vote.

VI. Date And Place for Next Meeting

NCTC members agreed to conduct a planning meeting to discuss the upcoming 2013 Federal Recreational Trails Program pre-application and application, and funding priorities. The committee agreed to meet on July 27 and 28, 2012 with this planning meeting possibly being held at the Dupont State Forest Conference Center.

VII. Adjourn Meeting

Motion – Paul Elliot made a motion to end the meeting at 4:30 p.m. Terry Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Barbara Oslund thanked all NCTC members and staff for an excellent meeting.